

8036
Of Despising YOUNG MINISTERS.

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED at the
Publick Ordination

OF

The Reverend Mr. WILLIAM FORD,
and Mr. SAMUEL PARKS,

A T

HABERDASHERS-HALL,
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By *W. HARRIS*, D. D. *R*

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and the Ministers present.*

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I TIM. iv. 12.

Let no Man despise thy Youth.

THE words are the direction of *Paul the aged* to young *Timothy*, and are a *canon* of the christian church truly *apostolical*: and tho' delivered upon this particular occasion is of standing use, and properly binding in like cases to all others. As you are now the youngest minister in this city called to the pastoral office, which I speak with the greater tenderness as it was once my own case; I thought the consideration of these words proper to the present circumstance, and a fit occasion of speaking to younger ministers what longer time and experience has taught me. What I have to offer from them, I shall reduce to the following Observations.

First, I observe here, That *young men*, in proper circumstances, may be admitted to

the christian ministry. This was the case here ; tho' *Timothy* was a young man, he
 1 Tim. iv. 6. was, notwithstanding that, a *good minister of Jesus Christ*. The word *velans* signifies any age from seventeen to twenty five, or even to thirty. It was *etas militaris* among the *Jews* and *Romans*, the time when they were capable of bearing arms, and is opposed not to manhood, but to old age.

Indeed there was something special in *Timothy's* case, agreeable to the extraordinary circumstance of those times ; *i. e.* That
 14. he had been *prophefied of*, and had the *gifts of the Spirit*, by the laying on of the Apostles hands. He was called and qualified for the ministerial work betimes, and in some circumstances which were extraordinary : whereas presbyters were generally men of years and standing in life, as well as in the christian profession ; of tried and approved characters, and greater gravity and experience ; as their name imports. He therefore exhorts him to be the more careful of himself, and to supply what was wanting in years by the excellence of his doctrine and behaviour. And tho' one would not choose that men should enter too soon into the ministerial office, or venture upon stated work, till they are well furnished by preparatory studies and by some experience and wisdom too ; nevertheless the circumstances of things make a difference ; when men are early
 qualified

qualified for it, and have hearts greatly disposed to it, when the necessities of the churches require it, and they are providentially called out to it betimes; nothing hinders but they may be admitted to the christian ministry, and that alone cannot reasonably be made a bar or objection to it. We have known some instances of younger ministers who have been blest with remarkable acceptance and success, especially among younger people, and which has laid the foundation of their after greater usefulness of life.

Secondly, I observe, That younger ministers are more *liable* to be despised. This is plainly implied in this cautionary direction; for if young men were not in greater danger of contempt, the Apostle needed not be so solicitous to prevent it, and caution against it. He repeats the same caution to *Titus*, and probably for Tit.ii. 16. the same reason, because of his youth.

This is evident in the reason of things. When younger men are separated to the christian ministry, and advanced to office in the church, and are *over them in the Lord*, elder persons, especially of greater knowledge and experience, may be tempted to think meanly of them, and scorn to be instructed and reproved by them. Their own inexperience in the affairs of life,
and

and the knowledge of humane nature, may give some advantages against them, and betray some weakness and mistake. Some or other defect or indiscretion in conduct may easily lay them open to censure and blame, especially with the less candid, and those of greater severity of mind, who are not so well disposed to make a favourable construction and proper allowance, for the weakness of humane nature, and the disadvantage of youth. Above all, they who bear them ill-will, or are not well affected towards them; the wicked and profane, will watch for their halting, take all advantage against them, and aggravate every thing which is amiss, to blast their credit and weaken their influence, to render their office contemptible, and their labours insignificant. So the Prophet speaks

Is. xxix.
21.

of those, who *make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him who reproveth in the gate*: And the Jews disparaged our Lord and his Apostles, and represented them in odious characters, and under all disadvantage, to prejudice the people against them, and weaken the impression of their doctrine and miracles.

There was a great deal of reason for this caution, and it was with great propriety the Apostle advises young *Timothy* in this case; it would have been less needful in the case of elder persons, of greater standing

standing and experience, who would be more likely to keep up the honour of their office, and where there would be less pretence and occasion of contempt. So we often read in the *Roman* writers of *spretæ pueritia, contemptus juventæ*, &c. I observe again,

Thirdly, That 'tis a great *evil* to despise them. And this is strongly implied too: not only that there is great danger of it in these circumstances, but that there is great hurt and mischief in it. *Let no man despise thy youth; i. e.* Take heed of contempt. 'Tis a great evil in you to make your self despised; and 'tis a great evil in them who do it. If either you give a just cause for it, or they do it without one: Let the reason of it be what it will, and let it spring from whatsoever cause: If you are despised by the people, and become contemptible in their eyes, either through your faulty behaviour, or their unreasonable humour, and wrong temper of mind; 'tis either way a great evil, and has very bad consequences. For in that case they can never be supposed to pay the respect which is due to the ministerial office, nor will you be ever likely to profit them, or do them much good. Their *low* opinion, and mean thoughts of you, and much more their *ill* opinion, will prevent your acceptance

ceptance in all your ministrations, and destroy the efficacy of them. But I shall speak of this afterwards. The Apostle therefore fitly cautions against it as a thing of consequence in the present case. A due esteem of the ministerial work, and of the persons of ministers, disposes people to give attention to what they say, and to pay a proper regard to it; and the contempt of the ministry is a dishonour to God, and destructive of all the benefit of it. So

Luk.x. 16. our Lord says, *He who despiseth you, despiseth me.* And the Apostle says, *He therefore who despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath given to us his holy spirit: ὁ ἀδεύων*, it signifies to abolish a thing, or remove it from its proper place as unworthy or insignificant.

Fourthly, I observe, That great *caution* and care ought to be used by younger ministers, that they be not despised by the people. *Let no man despise thy youth:* The word here is *καταφρονέω*, in *Titus* 'tis *μεμφρονέω*, which is sometimes used in the same signification, and the connection there plainly determines it to that sense. It must be understood in the nature of a caution to *Timothy*, and a direction to his conduct. But can we help other mens despising us; is that in our power? Have we the command of their spirits or tongues?

Won't they despise us whether we will or no? What can we do in this case, and why are *we* charged that others don't despise us, and not rather the *people* charged not to despise us? I answer, Tho' we can't govern the thoughts and actions of others towards us, we can do much to prevent the occasion of them, and are obliged to do so: and so the sense more explicitly, is, "Give
 " no just occasion or pretence for con-
 " tempt; carry thy self with that gravity
 " and wisdom, notwithstanding thy youth,
 " as not to be justly liable to it; let your
 " good conduct and behaviour towards
 " them, prevent their ill one towards you,
 " and cut off all occasion of it. Let them
 " despise you at their peril: Let it be their
 " fault, and not yours." A like form of expression we have in other places; *Let not* Rom. xiv.
your good be evil spoken of: i. e. By the un-^{16.}
 due manner, or indiscreet conduct of it.
 And so 'tis explained in this Epistle, by *giving* Chap. v.
occasion to the adversary to speak reproach-^{14.}
fully; and is evident by the charge the A-
 postle gives to the church of *Corinth*; *Now* 1 Epist.
if Timothy come, see that he may be with xvi. 11.
you without fear—Let no man therefore de-
spise him. Here the word is ἐξουδένω, to set
 at nought, and make nothing of him.

I shall only further observe, That this negative caution must be understood by a figure usual in all language, to import something

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1 Theff. iv. 8.

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positive and direct: *q. d.* Keep up the due authority and credit of thy ministry; Let thy behaviour be such as not only to avoid just contempt, but secure a just esteem. But now the question will be, What is that conduct and behaviour which younger ministers are obliged to use, to prevent their being despised, and secure a just esteem? This is the point the Apostle has in his eye, and which I would propose to consider a little distinctly. I shall reduce what I have to say to it, to these two heads. (1.) I shall consider the care and caution which is needful to be used, in order to this end. (2.) The needfulness of it, or upon what accounts 'tis necessary.

I. I shall endeavour to represent the *caution* and care which is needful, in the principal instances, and to which all others may be reduced. And here are two things of a different kind. 1. There are some things which must be carefully avoided, which naturally tend to breed contempt. 2. Some things must be carefully attended to, which are proper to prevent it, and to secure a just esteem.

§. 1. Some things must be carefully *avoided*, which naturally tend to breed contempt. There is no way to prevent being despised by others, if our character and
con-

(II)

conduct are contemptible. Contempt as naturally follows meanness, and unsuitableness, as honour does real worth ; they are inseparable as the shadow and the body, in the accounts of proper judges, and rightly-disposed minds. Of this kind are the following instances.

1st, Ignorance and unskilfulness. When young men thro' want of capacity or application, come into the ministry unprepared, and without competent measures of necessary knowledge ; raw and unstudied, who have not used their time and advantages for proper improvement, and instead of attending to the real and substantial knowledge of the works of God, and the reason of things, which is true *philosophy* ; or the diligent study of the scriptures, and the knowledge of revealed religion ; the reading some sound *criticks* upon the Bible, and judicious *practical* writers, which is to be a great part of their standing work ; saunter away their time in idleness and pleasure, or chiefly apply themselves to lighter studies, and books of wit and entertainment, which should only be the diversion of leisure hours, and relief of severer studies : Where this is the case, no wonder they come out unfurnished with useful learning, and appear insufficient for ministerial work, find themselves at a loss in opening the Scriptures, and accommodating them

to the states of men, and the uses of life ; and only betray their own weakness, and expose themselves to contempt. So the Apostle speaks of some, who *desired to be teachers*
 1 Tim. i. 7. *of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.* Such a one is *unskilful in the word of righteousness*, ἀπειρος inexperienced in the christian doctrine ; he adds, *for he is a babe.* He is
 2 Ep. ii. 15. not capable of *rightly dividing the word of truth*, and cannot be *approved*, and needs to be *ashamed.*

They have not studied the grounds and evidence of divine truth, or the reason and importance of things ; nor digested in some measure the scripture doctrine, and reduced it to its proper order, and in due connection and consistency with it self. They are not able to use it upon all occasions and in its true meaning ; but play with the sound of words, and handle it with impropriety, and evident marks of improficiency and neglect. And this cannot but make them meanly thought of by more knowing christians, and weaken all their reverence of them, and breed a disregard. How can we expect esteem from others, when we appear unfurnished our selves, and without any sufficient ground for it ? Are not they justly despised in any other profession of life, who appear unqualified for the proper business of it, after sufficient time and helps for improvement ? 2dly,

2dly, A *vain* and unferious mind. If young ministers are fufficiently prepared by natural capacities and due improvement, and not defective in any point of ufeul knowledge, confidering their ftanding and circumftance; yet if they are not truly ferious and rightly difpofed, if they fhew a vanity and levity of mind, without an habitual fenfe of God, or any fuitable impreffion of divine truth, or due regard to the work in which they are engaged; without any zeal or concern for the glory of God, and the good of the fouls of men; if they only keep up the outward forms of religion, perform their work as a neceffary task, or only as a means of fubfiftence: it cannot but weaken their efteem in the minds of ferious chriftians, whatfoever their capacities and attainments may otherwife be, and notwithstanding the decencies and civilities of life they may fhew them.

Or if they appear with fome feriousnefs juft in the performance of minifterial work, in praying and preaching, and adminiftring; but betray a conftant vanity of mind, and fhew no fenfe or regard to religion at other times; it cannot but appear with great impropriety, and give a juft difguft. And the reafon is, That the work of the miniftry is a great and ferious work: 'Tis to offer up folemn prayers to God in behalf of the people, and to fpeak to them in the name of God, to tranfact

transact with God and man in things of the highest nature, and most awful consequence. A vain mind is unsuitable to the nature of the service, and the character they bear ; and no more likely to be profitable to others, than to be acceptable to God. Tho' I would not here be understood to condemn the cheerfulness, or pleasantry of conversation upon proper occasions, or to approve of a *monkish* retirement, or *cynical* sourness and moroseness of mind: I only fear we stand here upon slippery ground, and without due guard, may very easily exceed.

3dly, *Idleness* and neglect, or a careless conduct and behaviour. When men perhaps sufficiently prepared for their work, and well capable of it, and who are not wholly vain, or destitute of a serious sense of things, are yet negligent in their attendance to it, and performance of it, betray an idleness and indolence, and want of close application and diligence about it, and don't improve their talents, or use the capacities and abilities which God has given them ; when they come not duly prepared to their work, and act in a superficial manner in it ; when their prayers and their sermons are not duly consider'd before-hand, but evidently hasty and sudden, not carefully weighed or laid together, or decently and properly express'd, neither well digested, or well clothed, and without any justness or propriety in the thought
or

or expression; or when they are delivered in a cold and careless manner, without any fervour of spirit, or concern of mind, and with evident marks of inattention and disregard: this is truly to *do the work of the Lord negligently*, and forfeits the blessing of God, as well as the esteem of men.

Or again, when they are diverted from their proper work by any secular affairs, or by other studies; and instead of close retirement and diligent thought, are *entangled with the affairs of life*, or the ^{2 Tim. ii.} pleasures of conversation: and when in ⁴ consequence of this, they needlessly delay their preparations for publick service, and straiten themselves in time for it, and either don't leave sufficient leisure for deliberate thoughts, or indispose and unfit themselves by too much attention to other things. It cannot but breed a just contempt to see men otherwise able and qualified for their work, careless in the discharge of it, and wanting in due application to it. Unstudied sermons, and unconsidered prayers, a careless indifference and unconcern of mind in sacred work, cannot but offend and disgust serious people, who attend their ministry from a sense of duty to God, and with a design of spiritual edification.

I shall give one instance more of this kind, and that is, The *undue* use of lawful helps, or the use of other men's works; *i. e.* otherwise than to enrich our minds,

2 Cor. x.
15, 16.

and increase our own knowledge, for that would be not to chew our food, but to swallow it whole, which is never well digested, and ministers no kindly nourishment. We may apply the Apostle's words to this case, *Not boasting of things beyond our measure, that is of other mens labours; and not boasting in another man's line of things made ready to our hands.* Indeed nothing is more contemptible: for how should people respect them who take no pains for their edification, and do nothing for them but what they can do as well for themselves, and live, like drones in a hive, upon others industry, and effectually prevent their own improvement?

I shall close this head with this remark, That in great straits of time through necessary avocations, and attendance to other duties of their place, it were perhaps better to use a sermon carefully composed at proper leisure, than a sudden indigested performance: and our people, I doubt, hardly attend enough to the case, especially of elder ministers, who have not only the care of their own congregations, but a weight of publick affairs, and the concerns of the common interest much in their hands; and when it proceeds not from neglect of duty, but the multiplicity of it: And especially when 'tis best suited to any particular and special purpose, which the circumstance
of

of any of the people may direct them to, and which they must be supposed to be best acquainted with. I doubt our Sermons are seldom so well attended to, or considered and remembered, but that a well-composed discourse upon an important subject, might bear a second hearing, upon a proper occasion, to edification and without offence. So the Apostle *Paul* tells the *Philippians*, *To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.* And *Peter* was not negligent, and thought it meet to put them always in remembrance of the things they knew, and to stir them up by way of remembrance. Phil. iii. 1; 2 Pet. i. 12;

4thly, *Vice*, or any sinful liberty, unworthy of themselves, and offensive to others. If there were no ignorance, or vanity or neglect, yet if there is any immorality of life, it will naturally breed contempt notwithstanding all the rest, and whatsoever good qualities there are beside. Thus if ministers allow themselves in any unruly passions, or excesses of life; if they are *lifted up with pride*, and bear themselves high upon their character and attainments, affect an air of superiority among themselves, or carry it with distance and disdain to others, as if they were *lords of the heritage*, and had *dominion over your faith*; and not the *ministers of Christ*, and *your servants for*
1 Tim. iii. 6.

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Jesus sake, or in his work: If they are easily transported with anger, and fired with rage upon little neglects, and slighter provocations, are *self-willed, soon angry*: If they are governed by sensual appetite, and intemperate in eating and drinking, *given to much wine*; or chargeable with any impurity which stains the character, and defiles the mind, and don't *keep themselves pure* from their own iniquity as well as other mens: If they are worldly and covetous, *greedy of filthy lucre*, contrary to the whole doctrine of the gospel, and the design of the gospel-ministry, which is to raise mens hearts from earth to heaven, hunting after preferment, and increasing their worldly store, and which is commonly joined with it, are griping and oppressive, contentious and litigious, resolved to make the best of every thing, *seeking their own things, and not the things of Jesus Christ, or the things of other men*: This naturally lessens all regard to them, and leads to great contempt. People justly expect better things from them, and have a great right to expect them; at least a regular and unblameable behaviour, that they should avoid the sins they preach against, and regard the duties they press upon others, and act like reasonable and honest men, and in confidence with themselves. The vitious and faulty lives of ministers are a great scandal to

to the world, and a great obstruction to the success of the gospel.

The Apostle warns *Timothy* to this purpose, *Flee also youthful lusts*: q. d. Be ^{2 Tim. ii. 22.} especially aware of the vices of youth, of all vanity and conceit of mind, and all inordinacy of affection in the pursuit and enjoyment of any sensible good: Keep up a due guard over yourself; keep at a safe distance from all the incentives and occasions of them; from the beginnings and approaches towards them, from every instance, and every degree. So we find the wicked priests were treated with contempt by the people for their disobedience to God: *Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as you have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.* ^{Mal. ii. 9.}

§. 2. There are some things to be carefully *attended* to, which are proper to prevent contempt; and secure a just esteem: And if the former measures are rightly laid, it will be the more easy to judge of these, and to direct to the proper instances. For example;

There must be a good proficiency and improvement in *knowledge*. When younger ministers propose themselves to trial, and pass their examination before elder ministers, it then appears what proficiency they have made, and what diligence they have used; what attainments they have made

in humane learning; and what knowledge they have of divine things. When they appear to have studied with diligence, and improved their time, to have made a good progress, and laid a good foundation, in the several parts of useful learning: particularly, when they have much studied their Bible in the original languages, and well considered the true nature and evidence of the christian religion, the great and substantial doctrines and duties of it, in their absolute nature, and their relation and dependence on one another; they appear with advantage, and deserve commendation, and are readily approved and recommended.

2 Cor. iv.
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Thus they enter upon the ministry with reputation And when they appear upon the publick stage, they are able to recommend themselves. When they are found capable of opening the scriptures with good judgement and understanding, representing the truths of religion with advantage, and setting them in a clear light; and pressing them with convincing evidence on the consciences of men, or in the Apostles awful words, *commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*; they cannot fail of a just esteem with the serious and judicious, and give encouraging hopes of their future usefulness, and further attainments. Every one is ready to commend and encourage them; they will be
2 spoken

spoken of with honour, and it may be, revered and admired, according to the degrees of their proficiency, and the prospect of their greater significancy, in life. So the Apostle tells *Timothy*; *And from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures,—that the man of God, or the christian minister, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.* ^{2 Tim. iii. 15.} ^{—17.}

Besides, There must be true *piety*, or a serious spirit. Younger ministers should be first possess'd with the *importance* of religion, as well as the knowledge of it, and have a due impression of it upon their own minds, before they attempt to represent and press it upon others. They have their own concern in it equal with other christians, are obliged to understand and believe it, and to live and act according to it, and are accountable to the same common Lord, by the same rule of judgment.

When young ministers appear in the world with a just sense of religion upon their minds, and a due concern for its propagation and success; when they shew a great regard for the honour of God, and of the Redeemer, and the interests of his kingdom among men, to promote christian vertue and godliness in the world, and the prosperity and salvation of the souls of men; to improve them in christian knowledge, to increase their faith, further their holiness

holiness and joy of heart, direct and caution them in the various duties and trials of the christian life, to promote brotherly love, and benevolence and good will to men, a spiritual and heavenly mind, and a dayly preparation for the final blessedness; this will not fail to recommend them to the love and esteem of all the wise and good: They will be listened to with attention and regard, and be likely to be owned and blest of God. When they appear to be in good earnest in their work, and heartily concerned to answer the ends of it, it will not only effectually prevent any one's despising them, but will naturally draw a respect and reverence too: They will have a *testimony* in the consciences of men, as well as a *record on high*. And so the Apostle speaking of the *unfeigned faith*, *i. e.* real inward piety in opposition to outward appearance, or vain affectation, which first dwelt in *Timothy's* progenitors, adds, *And I am persuaded that in thee also.*

Further, There must be *diligence* and faithfulness in the discharge of their work. Let younger ministers be careful to apply themselves to their proper work, and act as those who have it at heart. Give all diligence in the use of every proper means; excite and stir up every power and capacity, and whatsoever gift and talent, for your own further improvement, and greater use-

usefulness in your respective service. So the
 Apostle directs *Timothy* immediately after
 the text, *Till I come, give attendance to read-^{ver. 13, 14}*
ing, to exhortation, to doctrine; neglect not
the gift which is in thee. To reading, for
 the increase of his knowledge; and to *ex-*
hortation and doctrine, as the exercise of
 his office, and the use of his knowledge and
 gifts. And again, *Meditate on these things*; ^{1 Ep. iv.}
give thy self wholly to them, that thy pro-^{15.}
fit may appear to all men. And, *Take heed*; ^{ἐν ᾧ τοῖς}
to thy self and thy doctrine; continue in ^{ιδε.}
them. Be wholly employed and taken up ^{16.}
 in them, without any other employment; ^{ἐπιμενε}
 and constantly engaged and closely intent ^{ἀνολοῖς.}
 upon them. So the Apostles gave them-
 selves continually to prayer, and to the mi-
 nistry of the word, in opposition to leaving ^{Aët. vi.}
the word of God and serving tables. And ^{2, 4}
 the Apostle *Paul* did *spend and was spent* in ^{2 Cor. xii.}
 the service of the churches. ^{15.}

If you are daily employed in your proper
 work, and diligently engaged in it, with as
 little diversion from it as may be; if you
 grow and improve by a close and constant
 application to it, are observant of every op-
 portunity of good, watchful against snares
 and hindrance, *fervent in spirit* in all your
 performance, and *doing it heartily* as unto
 the Lord; one might safely undertake that
 you shall prevent all contempt, and preserve a
 just esteem among good men. No man will
 have

have occasion given of censure and reproach ; every one will commend and approve : your people will attend your ministry with a constant pleasure, and rejoice in the hope of your greater usefulness in the church of God.

Finally, An *exemplary behaviour*, or a wise and well-order'd conversation. This stands in close connexion with the text, and is opposed to it ; *Let no man despise thy youth : But be thou an example to the believer, in word, conversation, doctrine, charity, in spirit, faith, purity* : q. d. If you would not be despised by the people, be exemplary to them in your doctrine and conversation, by faithful diligence in your work, and a careful behaviour in life : Set them an example of faith in God, and love to men, of zeal and courage, of purity and sincerity of heart. Be watchful of your behaviour that you make no slips, and take no false steps : Keep close to your rule in all the duties of your Ministry, and the conduct of common life. So he speaks in other places : *But thou, O man of God, flee these things ; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*
 1 Tim. vi. 11.
 Tit. ii. 7. And he requires Titus, *In all things shew thy self a pattern of good works.* The Apostle Peter exhorts the presbyters, *To be ensamples to the flock.*
 1 Pet. v. 3.

Let younger ministers be ambitious to excel in holiness, and exemplary walk : Set a fair
 fair

fair copy for those to follow among whom you labour, of all the graces of the christian life; of faith and purity, of righteousness and godliness, of diligence and watchfulness, of meekness and patience; and you will not only be secure from contempt, but appear amiable and lovely in their eyes. It will carry great conviction to the minds of men, when you can say with the Apostle, in your measure, *Brethren be followers of us,* ^{1 Cor. xi.} *as we are of Christ. Be followers together* ^{1. Philip. iii.} *of me, and mark them who walk so as you* ^{17.} *have us for an example.* And when you can appeal with him to the people, *And ye* ^{1 Thes. ii.} *are witnesses and God also, how holily and* ^{10.} *justly, and unblamably, we behaved our selves among you who believe;* and as he does to *Timothy, Thou hast fully known my doctrine* ^{2 Tim. iii.} ^{10.} *and manner of life.* When *Eli's sons* were despised, young *Samuel grew on and was in* ^{1 Sam. ii.} ^{26.} *favour with the Lord, and also with men.*

II. I am next to consider the *needfulness* of it, or upon what accounts 'tis necessary. I might argue this from several considerations which the present limits will not allow. I shall only mention these two.

1. The *honour* of their office requires it. The ministerial work is represented with great advantage in the new testament, both

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as it relates to God and to the people : 'Tis a wise and gracious appointment of God for the good of men. So they are *embassadors* for Christ, *Stewards* of the *household* and of the *mysteries of God*, *Angels* or messengers of the churches, *ministers by whom they believe*, *guides*, *rulers*, *examples*. And tho' some of these have a direct reference to the Apostles, who only received immediate revelations from Christ; and authoritatively declared his will to the world, and there is a propriety to them not common to others; yet as the office of the ministry is appointed for the standing service and benefit of the christian church, so I think they may fitly be applied to them in a lower and subordinate sense; and others besides the Apostles are so represented in the scriptures. Upon this supposition there is certainly a great dignity and honour in the ministry, and he who desires the office of a christian *bishop* desires

1 Tim. iii. *a good work*; and they who *labour in the word and doctrine*, are *worthy of double honour*, and to be *highly esteemed for their work sake*.

Now ministers should be careful to keep up the honour of their office, and prevent any indignity to it. If God has honoured

2 Tim. i. *us by enabling us, and counting us faithful,*
10. *putting us into the ministry*, should not we in all reason, be careful not to dishonour it?
and

and to give no offence in any thing, that the ² Cor. vi. *ministry be not blamed*, but in all things ap- ³.
prove our selves as the ministers of God?

When ministers give just occasion of reproach, the *ministry* comes at length to be blamed; as *Eli's* sons, those vile young priests, made the people *abhor the offering of the* 1 Sam. ii. *Lord*, and not only render'd themselves, ¹⁷. but their service contemptible. Who will honour the office, when they themselves dishonour it; or forbear despising it, when they make it contemptible? We should be careful for our *work sake*, as we are related to Christ, as his ministers, and to the people, as their instructors and guides, to secure the credit and esteem of it. We are otherwise chargeable with their disregard to a divine appointment, and the *name of God and his* 1 Tim. vi. *doctrine is blasphemed through you*, and they ¹. are made to *blaspheme that worthy name* Jam. ii. 7. *by which you are called*. Hereupon,

2. Their *usefulness* and success depend very much upon it. The work of the ministry in its original and true design, is not only honourable, but useful and beneficial to men. The ascended Redeemer gave *pastors and teachers*, as well as *Apostles and Prophets*, the office as well as the gifts; for Eph. iv. *the perfecting of the saints, for the work* ¹². *of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ*. 'Tis design'd to promote the

knowledge of God, and the faith of the gospel, the administration of the gospel-worship, and the edification and salvation of the souls of men: 'Tis fitted to serve, with great advantage, the greatest purposes of good, and the highest and noblest ends. Every faithful minister is concerned above all things to answer the ends of his ministry; to see a *spiritual seed*, and the *pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hands*. The Gal. iv. 19. Apostle Paul travailed in birth till Christ was formed in the souls of men; and longed after them all in the bowels of Christ Jesus; 3 Joh. 4. and the Apostle John had no greater joy than to see his children walking in the truth.

Now 'tis absolutely necessary to the acceptance and success of all their endeavours, to keep up a just esteem. The whole success of their ministry very much depends upon it: For who will much regard one whom he despises in his heart? The truths they deliver, and the ordinances they administer, will lose their force and efficacy, if upon any account they suffer themselves to be despised. Their ill conduct, and ill lives, will make them mean and contemptible, whatsoever else they have to recommend them. Their office and character will never support, with the pious and wise, the credit of an ignorant and vitious minister. Their good doctrine, and excellent gifts, will not avail
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so much to secure their respect, as their neglect and immoralities will, to breed contempt. Honour and esteem give credit and weight to what we say, procure a favourable audience, and engage attention and regard ; when contempt breeds dislike, weakens the force of the best things, and invites neglect. What good can they propose to do to any people, who have lost all hold of their affection, and interest in their esteem ?

And this not only prevents all the good they might hope to do, but it does a great deal of evil. 'Tis an unspeakable prejudice to the souls of men, and tends to weaken their regards to religion it self. And as no man loves to be despised, how just soever the reason of it is, 'tis well if they are not led to despise the people back again, and lay a foundation of mutual uneasiness and complaints. They proceed from contempt to aversion and dislike, from thence to contention and opposition ; and so all mutual friendship is destroyed, and all the comfort of life. And what account will they give at last, of their unsuccessful labours, and just contempt ? What will they be able to say for themselves ? They cannot say as some faithful ministers, 'tis to be feared, will be forced to do : " I studied and laboured hard ; I used my best capacities
" and endeavours ; I walked unblamably
" among

“ among them, to answer the ends of my
 “ ministry; but *they* were to blame; it
 “ was owing to their neglects and care-
 “ lessness, to their unper-suadableness and
 “ disobedience: I am *clear of the blood of*
 “ all men; their *blood be upon their own*
 “ *heads.*” No, but they lost their labours by
 their *own* fault; they first made themselves
despised, and then neglected; they threw
 stumbling-blocks in the way of those they
 were to guide, and undermined and de-
 feated their own ends by their insufficiency
 or unworthiness. So God speaks of the
 Mal. ii. 8. wicked priests, *You have caused many to*
stumble at the law, ye have corrupted the
covenant of Levi. What aspect, what
 consequence, must this have at last? How
 offensive must it be to their Lord and judge?
 How grievous to themselves? How severe
 will their reckoning be? How terrible their
 punishment hereafter?

I shall conclude the discourse with the following exhortations.

1. Let the *rich* be persuaded to en-
 courage the *education* of hopeful youth.
 One reason of the contempt of ministers,
 though that is not their fault, nor in their
 power to prevent, is their mean condition
 and narrow circumstances of life. They
 are not only incapable of *hospitality*, but
 are not always sufficiently supported to
 maintain

maintain the decencies of life, or perhaps, sometimes to keep themselves out of debt; which is always a great distress, and sometimes a great snare, to honest and generous minds: The Apostle speaks of *falling into reproach and the snare of the devil.* In ^{1 Tim. iv.} 7. this case one would greatly wish, that they who are bless'd with estates and fortunes of life, would sometimes breed up their own children, who are fit for it, to the work of the ministry, who can make a comfortable provision for them, and set them above contempt. If they consecrate the *male of the flock* to the service of God, it would be highly acceptable to him, and bring down a blessing upon all the rest, as the first fruits did under the law; for God *will honour them who honour him,* ^{1 Sam. ii. 30.} *and they who despise him shall be lightly esteemed.* And tho' the cause of *Nonconformity* does not make it an inviting employment, or likely to promote their worldly advantage; we have no dignities and preferments to tempt their ambition, or bias their minds; 'tis however the more needful for that reason, for those who espouse this interest, and think well of it, to supply that defect, and remove this objection out of the way.

At least let the rich be entreated to contribute to the liberal education and support
of

of well-chosen and hopeful youth; for their more advantageous appearance in the world, and successful performance of their work; and that they may not be entangled or distressed with the affairs of life: Which I take to be one of the wisest and most extensive instances of publick usefulness to the church of God. But it would be great injustice and ingratitude, not to own the generous bounty, and wise care of several such in this respect.

2. Let *elder ministers* be careful whom they *admit* and encourage in the ministry. That none be admitted who are unqualified according to the characters required in the gospel, and who are like to dishonour their office, and bring themselves into contempt. Let us be conscientiously careful, for our
 1 Tim. v. 22. parts, to *lay hands suddenly on no man*, or be *partakers of other mens sins*; nor be led by any private friendships, or personal regards, to betray our trust, or injure the church of God. But I take not upon me to direct my brethren, especially where I am not sensible of any remarkable neglect.

3. Let *younger ministers* be careful not to be despised. Let me recommend the apostolical direction to you who are now entering upon this sacred work; *Let no man despise thy youth*. Give them no occasion or advantage against you, by your doctrine

doctrine or conversation: Keep up your credit and authority with them by faithful diligence in your work, and a prudent conduct of life. For though we should not be ambitious of *vain glory*, or seek the *pleasing* and *praise* of men, simply for it self, and as our end; yet we should be desirous of the blessing of a *good name*, and by all proper means secure a *good report*, for the sake of our ministry, and the usefulness and comfort of life. Let younger ministers be careful in all their private studies, and publick performances, and in the whole conduct of life, to act with constant diligence, seriousness and watchfulness. Allow me to speak my heart upon this occasion, with tenderness and concern, as a brother, and a friend, who sincerely wishes your welfare and success. Let me recommend a free converse, upon proper occasions, with the more experienced: *He who walk-* Prov. xiii.
eth with wise men, shall be wise; and we^{20.} may learn something from mens different talents and attainments. Be especially careful of your conversation with one another, that it be made useful and profitable, and not suffered to run out wholly into innocent freedoms, or meer entertainment: Contribute to one another's improvement in knowledge and seriousness by a communication of thoughts, and the spiritual
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exercises of social devotion. No man, who has not tried, it can tell the importance of solemn prayer in the difficulties and success of ministerial service: Always supposing the constant use of secret prayer, without which no minister or christian can ever hope to thrive and prosper. Fix a deliberate judgment of the way you choose, upon a mature and impartial consideration of the whole of the case; and be steady and faithful to the conviction of your minds, not discouraged by present difficulties, or byassed by worldly prospects; *holding faith and a good conscience.* Don't trifle with conscience, or offer violence to its dictates upon any consideration whatsoever, which may either make a breach upon your integrity, distress your spirits, or hazard the favour and blessing of the Almighty in all you do. Let those who are upright and serious wait the issues of providence, under present disadvantages, for all the after-disposals of life. Cultivate a mutual friendship and confidence in early life, which may lay a foundation of mutual assistance and support, in all the after service and trials of it; and beware of distance and distrusts, which always weaken, and often prove fatal to friendship.

1 Tim. i.
19.

I would advise younger ministers to keep close to the scripture *doctrine*, and the scripture-

ture-language in all their publick performances, not affecting to be *wise above what is* Tim. i. *written*, and avoiding unprofitable *questions*, ^{46.} and *strife of words*, which the Apostle often — vi. 4. warns against. Be cautious of meddling too much with abstruse and speculative matters, which are of less consequence in religion, and in which the wisest men may have different apprehensions; rather modestly leave that to the elder and more experienced. Insist much upon the plain and important points of more unquestionable truth and duty, as the method of our redemption by Christ, and the necessary terms of a sinner's acceptance with God; in which the essence of christian religion truly lies, and the welfare of mens souls is more nearly concerned. 'Tis a great impropriety for younger ministers to appear forward and confident in things of a difficult nature, in which wiser than they may think differently, and riper years may alter their own sentiments.

Let me particularly bespeak you, my dear Brother, to keep up a due sense of the dignity and duty of the ministerial office, for the greater glory of God by you, and the greater success of all your labours. Set before you the example of other eminent ministers, who have gone before you in this work, and in this interest: Consider

their faith in God, their constant labours, their self-denial, their usefulness, their holy lives, and comfortable deaths, to direct your conduct, and animate your mind. And as the Apostle here puts *Timothy* in mind of the *unfeigned faith which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice*; to make him sensible of his privilege, and provoke his emulation; so let me put *you* in mind upon this occasion of the eminent faith and piety, the warm and lively zeal, the unblamable and exemplary walk, the acceptable and successful labours, to great numbers, thro' the course of many years, of your own worthy grandfather Mr. *Nathanael Vincent*, whose name is still precious in the churches, and to whose ministry I owe the first rudiments of christian knowledge and the early impressions of serious religion.

4. Let the *people* be cautioned against *despising* their ministers, especially for their *youth*. What regard is due to elder ministers who have spent their lives and labours in the *service of your faith*, it would not, perhaps, be so proper for me to say, nor does my subject lead me directly to it: Let them speak, among whom we have laboured. But I may speak the more freely of younger ministers, as I have spoken freely to them. Despising them often proceeds from faulty causes, and has very pernicious effects.

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'Tis sometimes from pride and self-conceit, from vanity and inconstancy of mind, from unreasonable prejudice and distaste, from an undue rigour and want of candour, taking the advantage of lesser slips and mistakes, where there are valuable qualities, and a prevailing habit of goodness. And 'tis productive of a great deal of hurt, for it tends to discourage them in their work at first setting out, and others from undertaking it; to grieve and distress their spirits, and destroy the efficacy and success of all their labours. Who shall honour them if you despise them? Where shall they be useful, if you render them contemptible? I doubt we are not always sufficiently aware how high the guilt may rise, and how wide the mischief may spread.

Let me bespeak your prudence and candor to younger ministers, who are well furnished, and truly serious, and desirous of being useful. Take not the advantage of inadvertence and weakness; bear not too hard upon them for the lesser failings and follies of life, rather make a candid excuse, and cast a mantle of love over them: Be not captious and censorious, aggravating real faults, or charging them without ground. Make allowance for different natural tempers and turn of mind, and different talents and capacities, and all the dif-

disadvantages of inexperience. Be tender of their *reputation*, upon which the usefulness of their lives so much depends. Younger ministers must grow by age and experience, to greater wisdom, and further improvement, and more eminent usefulness: They are not born wise any more than other men; and the wisest and most experienced, were once young; and, it may be, had been cramped in all their after great attainments and success, if they had been unkindly treated in their younger years. I am sure some of us who entered young upon stated work, have reason to remember, with thankfulness to God, and to the honour of our people, their kindness and indulgence in early life. And tho' elder ministers may reasonably be supposed to be more knowing and experienced, wiser in counsel, and cooler in action; yet younger ministers, by the advantage of lively affection, and a certain sympathy in nature, are peculiarly suitable to younger people, and likely to be useful to the rising generation; to awaken their minds, and prepare them for further instruction.

Let me advise and entreat you to shew them all kindness and respect: Value and own what is truly excellent in them in any kind. Encourage their serious spirits and sincere indeavours, by ordinarily attending
their

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their ministry, receiving the truth from their mouths, and obeying the doctrine they deliver. So you may hope to find them daily improving, and become at length *able ministers of the new testament, and workmen who need not be ashamed*: And you who sit under their ministry, will receive the advantage of their gradual improvements, and be *prepared for every good work, and well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven.*

F I N I S.

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